



The Salonika Campaign Society - Researching a soldier's service in Salonika

Beginning your research

Researching a soldier's service in Salonika can be quite a challenge - but a rewarding one. Although the military produced many official documents related to enlistment, service, honours and death, a lot of these were lost during the Blitz of the Second World War. On the plus side, many of the surviving documents now exist in digital format – which can speed up the research process considerably.

Before beginning your research, gather as much information as you can from family records, history, photographs, and memories. If you can, collate information about

- **Background:** full name, date of birth, place of birth, places of residence, occupation. Birth, marriage, and death certificates can provide information as can the 1901 and 1911 census records.
- **Regiment/Service Number:** have you any records of this? Any medals (regiment and service number can be found on the rim of the medal)? Any photos? Any family stories of locations, events?

Once you have gathered as much detail as you can from your own resources and family, you may be in a position to find a **Service Record**. The primary set of army service records for the period relevant to the Salonika Campaign is held by the National Archives under the number **WO363** (the 'Burnt Records'). A smaller set of pension records ('Unburnt Records') is collection **WO634**. Service Records are available online from [Ancestry](#) and [Findmypast](#), for which a charge may be made. Your local library and/or family history society may be able to provide free access to these sites.

A second place to look is in the **Medal Records**. These do not always tell you a lot, but many have survived and are a reliable way to find a soldier's service number and unit. Most soldiers were awarded campaign medals, and some for gallantry and merit.

The National Archives has a search facility for these and, at the time of writing, records are free to download: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-medal-index-cards-1914-1920/>

A third place to look is in **Unit War Diaries**. Army units were obliged to keep a daily diary of reports on operations, intelligence summaries and other relevant material. They can often provide a fuller picture of the service of a soldier, but they tend to reflect the values of the age in that officers are mentioned by name, other ranks rarely. You will need to know the unit the soldier served with. You can search the National Archives to find the relevant unit diary: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-war-diaries-1914-1922/>

Unit War Diaries are held by the National Archives but, unfortunately, the Unit War Diaries for Salonika are not digitised. To read these, you will need to visit the [National Archives](#) at Kew.

1. **Useful Links**

From 'The Long, Long Trail':

- Comprehensive explanations, guides, further links. Highly recommended!
 - <https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/>

From 'Researching the Lives and Service Records of First World War Soldiers'

- Comprehensive explanations, guides, further links. Also highly recommended!
 - <https://www.researchingww1.co.uk/>

From the Army Museum Ogilby Trust:

- Find details of regimental museums and published histories:
 - <http://www.armymuseums.org.uk/>

From the Salonika Campaign Society:

- Find notes on the infantry divisions of the BSF in Salonika:
 - <https://salonikacampaignsociety.org.uk/bsf/infantry-divisions/>

From the National Archives:

- An overview of how it organises its records:
 - <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/first-world-war/>
- An overview of British Army Operations in the First World War:
 - <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-operations-first-world-war/>
- An explanation of researching a soldier from WW1:
 - <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-soldiers-of-the-first-world-war/>
- A guide to finding officers from WW1:
 - <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-officers-after-1913/>

<continues...>

2. **Tips**

- a. Many records, documents and images are now digitised. Finding them can be tricky - learning how to use Google efficiently is a very useful skill. For example,
 - Use quotation marks to search for an exact phrase. For example, type "Salonika" "hospital" "nurses" into Google and you will only get pages that contain these words, as well as variations of the words, for example, "nursing".
 - Use a minus sign to exclude words from your search. For example, "Salonika" -Gallipoli will return pages with Salonika but not Gallipoli in the text.
 - You can use Google to search *within* a site by typing *site:thesite'sname*. For example, by typing *site:awayfromthewesternfront.org india* you will only get pages from that site with the word India in it.
 - You can search for specific file types e.g. PDF files by typing *filetype:pdf* For example, *filetype:pdf salonika gunners artillery* returns PDF documents with these words in it.
 - Or you can use the Advanced Search tool within Google:
https://www.google.com/advanced_search
- b. Find and join your local family history society. A family history society is often a good place to go for advice and help, access to Ancestry/Findmypast, and other services.
- c. Online discussion groups can be useful places to ask questions. For example, at <https://www.greatwarforum.org/?forumId=211> you can find an active forum of knowledgeable people often able to provide help.
- d. Find a way to organise your materials and research but also back up your work. If you store materials on a PC, try backing up regularly – perhaps to a free or low-cost online service such as [Google Drive](#) or [Dropbox](#).
- e. A visit to the [National Archives](#) at Key can be a very interesting experience. If you do visit and find a relevant unit war diary, it can be useful to photograph the diary so that you can read it in more leisure at home.
- f. We're bound to say this but, join the Salonika Campaign Society!
<https://salonikacampaignsociety.org.uk/join-us/membership/>
For a small annual fee you can help to keep the memory of all those that served in Salonika alive, receive our excellent publication 'The New Mosquito' twice a year, and join fellow members on battlefield tours of the area. The Society also produces a DVD set of maps, publications, and back copies of 'The Mosquito.'

Finally, good luck with your research!

<ends>